

Different Cymbals for Different Drummers

by Bob Saydowski, Jr.

Every drummer needs cymbals. There are many brands of cymbals on the market now: Avedis Zildjian, K. Zildjian, Paiste 2002, Camber, Ufip, Abex, and zillions of pieces of metal that manufacturers call "cymbals". But, how do you pick them out?

When you first walk into a music store or drum shop, you should prepare yourself with answers to the following questions: What type of cymbal do I need? What weight of cymbal do I need? What size do I need? What type of sound do I want? In what type of group will I be using the cymbal? A drummer's life has rarely been easy, and the huge variety of cymbals available makes things even more complicated. There are ride cymbals, crash cymbals, crash/ride cymbals, ping ride, dark ride, flat ride, mini-cup, rock, splash, sizzle, pang, swish, regular hi-hats, *New Beat* hi-hats, *SoundEdge* hi-hats ... all in usable diameters from six to 26 inches and ranging from paper-thin weight to heavy weight.

If you're into ear-splitting rock and roll, small cymbals should be avoided because they won't cut through the band and will crack easily due to the excessive strain they are put through. The "Rock" line of cymbals is more logical because the weight is heavier than medium weight and they have explosive power on stage. The *Rock Ride* cymbals have an extra-large bell for extra volume, while on the opposite end, *Mini-Cup* cymbals have very small bells. *Mini-*

cups are useful in small groups and recording situations where a "tight" sound is needed. The ride cymbal has almost no build-up in overtones and yields a positive stick sound as do heavy rides, ping rides, and the flat ride which has no bell at all. If you have a flat ride cymbal, but still need a bell for Latin-type ride rhythms, consider purchasing Ufip's 6" *Icebell* (available from Latin Percussion) and set it above the flat ride. A long mounting post would be needed for this.

In special-effect cymbals, "splash" cymbals are 6" to 12" in diameter, high-pitched and are choked off very quickly. "Sizzle" cymbals are actually ride or crash/ride cymbals with rivets installed for a buzzing effect. The pang and swish cymbals really have to be heard to be fully understood. The pang gives a "pangy" sound, and the swish or China type, is known in the business as a "garbage can cover". This type of cymbal has turned-up edges and gives somewhat of an exotic Far Eastern effect. They are also sometimes used upside down for a "bangy" crash effect. Swish cymbals used upside down become the loudest instrument on the bandstand at times, and must be used sparingly.

When choosing hi-hat cymbals, you should have the dealer get you a hi-hat stand that is similar to yours or better. It must have a tilter for the bottom cymbal which should be set at a slight angle. The top cymbal should not be too tight on the clutch and adjusted so it's about 1" to

1 1/2" from the bottom cymbal. Try 14", 15", and 13" (in that order) with the type of stick you regularly use. Use the foot pedal to hear the "chick" sound. A lot of hi-hat cymbals choke up, but a way to combat this is to use a cork washer at the bottom cymbal instead of a felt one. This will push the cymbals off one another, and thus prevent air-lock. Paiste's *Sound-Edge* hi-hats have a rippled bottom cymbal expressly designed to stop air-lock and also to give more volume.

Whenever setting cymbals on a stand, keep them fairly loose so they can vibrate freely. When choosing ride cymbals, try a 20", then an 18", and then a 22" using your favorite stick. Medium weight rides are the most popular, but medium-heavy and heavy weights are also being used to cut down the cymbal's overtones for a more definitive ride sound. A good crash cymbal size is 16" to 20". When testing, hit the cymbal with the shank of the stick for a solid crash.

One thing to keep in mind when testing Zildjian cymbals is that they all sound different; even if the weight and type are the same. It's best to set up about three or four of the same weight and type and just go down the line until you find one that strikes your fancy. On the other hand, Paiste cymbals are rather uniform, partially because they are pressed instead of cast. An 18" crash in one store will sound basically the same as the 18" crash next door. Paiste is also known for their "prototype" cymbals. These experimental cymbals can yield almost any

sound you want. Paiste is constantly turning out new types of cymbals. Newest to their line is an 8" *Bell* cymbal, a heavy *Ping Ride*, and an entire line of *Dark* cymbals. Paiste cymbals are still made in Switzerland with the exception of their *SoundEdge* hi-hats.

If you have a certain cymbal sound in mind, Zildjian will help you find the sound you're looking for. A drummer on Zildjian's staff will pick out a cymbal for you at the factory according to your specifications. I have had this done a few times, and they've been right on the button. The cymbals picked for you are stamped "special selection" on the underside of each one, and then shipped to a music store of your choice.

By the way, cymbals are not guaranteed against breakage, but both Zildjian and Paiste will inspect all cracked or broken cymbals and make adjustments if the breakage is due to a manufacturing flaw or defect and not due to misuse. Sometimes, Zildjian will re-cast a severely cracked or chipped cymbal. In return for a nominal labor charge, you get back essentially a new cymbal.

It may all seem confusing, but aren't drummers lucky to have such an assortment of cymbals, sticks, heads, and pedals instead of those unlucky guitarists with their three weights of picks?



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